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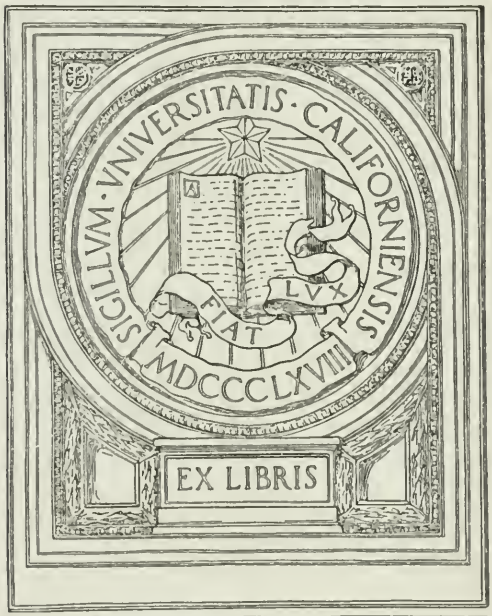

WHITTIER AS A POLITICIAN

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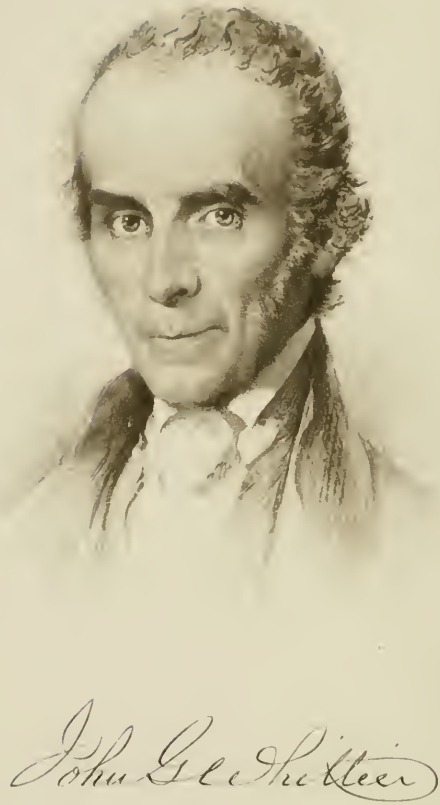
John G. Whittier

WHITTIER

AS

A Politician

Illustrated by his Letters to Professor ELIZUR WRIGHT, *Jr. Now first published.*

Edited, with Explanatory Text, by SAMUEL T. PICKARD.

BOSTON
CHARLES E. GOODSPEED
5a Park Street
1900

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WHITTIER

AS A

POLITICIAN

IN the last years of his life, Whittier's fame as a poet and philanthropist so greatly overshadowed his reputation as a shrewd and skillful politician, gained in the early and middle portions of his career, that the revelations made in his "Life and Letters" were surprising to most of his admirers. His earliest ambitions were political rather than literary, and before entering upon the anti-slavery crusade he aspired to a seat in Congress. When he espoused the cause

of the slave, however, he not only gave up all hopes in that direction, but did not hesitate to becloud his literary prospects by steady advocacy of a reform so unpopular that for years he was shut out from all hope of gaining a livelihood by his pen. The instincts of the politician were never dead within him, and to the end of his life he took the liveliest interest in the details of partisan conflict. Unlike many of the abolitionists, he never failed to make use of all the rights of citizenship. Although a third party man, and in a small minority until the Republican party came into power, his constant effort was to secure the election of either a Whig or a Democrat, it mattered not which, from whom he could obtain a pledge of at least partial support of anti-slavery demands. Thus, he induced the Liberty men of North Essex to unite with the Whigs to send Caleb Cushing to Congress, on Cushing's personal pledge to him that he would favor the right of petition, and freedom in the District of

Columbia. In South Essex he did a similar service for Robert Rantoul, Jr., a Democrat. He favored Marcus Morton for governor, against Edward Everett, and Morton was elected by the narrow margin of one majority. He was particularly active in the fusion that placed Charles Sumner in the Senate. At every election, town, state, or national, neither sickness nor storm prevented his appearing at the Amesbury town house. He used to take pleasure in saying that he voted for the presidency of Abraham Lincoln oftener than did any other man in the country. He had the unique honor of being a member of the electoral college, on both occasions, in 1860 and in 1864.

Most of the following letters to his friend Professor Wright show him in the light of an earnest and active politician, whose sole motive was the public welfare. Some of them have a humorous or satirical turn, thoroughly characteristic of the man in his intercourse with friends.

Prof. Elizur Wright, Jr., to whom these letters of Whittier were addressed, was born in South Canaan, Conn., in 1804. When he was six years of age his father removed to Tallmadge, Ohio, and became the principal of an academy at that place. His home was a station of the "underground railroad," where fugitive slaves were sheltered, and young Elizur early acquired anti-slavery opinions. He was graduated at Yale in 1826, and three years later became professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in the Western Reserve College, Hudson, Ohio. In December, 1833, he attended the convention at Philadelphia which formed the American Anti-Slavery Society, and here he first met Whittier. They were the youngest of the delegates, but each had already acquired a flattering reputation — the one as a poet, and the other as a teacher. They were chosen secretaries of the convention, and both of them at this time consecrated their lives to the cause, giving up all other ambitions.

Their friendship was cemented by many years of labor together in promoting a most unpopular reform.

In 1837 they spent several months together at the rooms of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in New York. A small part of their work was editing the "Emancipator" and the "Anti-Slavery Reporter." In the same building James G. Birney, Theodore D. Weld, Henry B. Stanton, and Joshua Leavitt had desks, and all were busily engaged in the effort to awaken the conscience of the country to the sin of slavery. They wrote personal appeals to public men, distributed in every Congressional district in the North petitions to be signed against the interstate slave trade, and in favor of freedom in the District of Columbia. They employed lecturers, wrote tracts, and operated a central station of the "underground railroad." In 1838 Whittier went to Philadelphia, and edited the "Pennsylvania Freeman" until early in 1840, when serious

illness compelled him to retire to his home in Amesbury. A Philadelphia physician told him he had not a year to live unless he gave up work. But in every interval of freedom from suffering he wrote poems that stirred the pulse of the whole North, and his letters to public men were full of wise counsel for the conduct of political campaigns. Some of the letters given below are fair samples of his method of work. Though warmly engaged in the same cause with Garrison, he could not agree with all the methods of that great leader, and occasionally there were sharp conflicts between them. Some of these differences are hinted at in these letters to his friend Wright.

In 1839 Professor Wright came to Boston and edited the "American Abolitionist." His "Chronotype" was started in 1846. In later years, after the battle for freedom was won, having a genius for mechanics and mathematics, Wright patented several useful inventions, and made a study of life

insurance statistics which led him to secure legislative enactments that have proved of great value to both insurers and insured. He was for eight years insurance commissioner of Massachusetts, and was afterwards consulting actuary of life insurance companies. He was instrumental in obtaining the passage of the Massachusetts forestry act of 1882. He died in Medford, Mass., in 1885.

We have at hand only Mr. Whittier's side of the correspondence between these earnest philanthropists. The first of these letters is a playful note sent by Whittier to Wright, while they were both employed as secretaries in the office of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York. It was in the month of February, 1837, and it may be guessed from the tone of the poet's billet that his room in the third story was not well warmed. He treats of the matter in a characteristically humorous way.

3d Story, 8th 2d Mo., 1837.

Friend Wright: I thank thee for thy favor, and would cheerfully grant thy request, but I am at present engaged in certain scientific experiments, and trying to solve certain difficult problems, as for example the following: —

1. What amount of coal, *without fire*, will warm a room 12 by 13 feet?

2. If ideas are things, as Bishop Berkeley supposes, what is the reason that the *idea of a fire* will not be a good substitute for the *reality?*

Thine, etc., J. G. W.

* * * * *

To understand the allusions in the next letter, it is necessary to remember that the division in the anti-slavery ranks had already been effected — the "old organization" under Garrison having taken ground against political action, and the "new organization," to which Whittier and Wright

3rd Story, 8th 2nd Mo. 1837

Friend Wright

I ~~would~~ thank the for thy favor, & would cheerfully grant thy request, but I am at present engaged in certain scientific experiments & trying to solve certain difficult problems, as for example the following.

1 What amount of coal without fire will warm a room, 12 by 13 ft in

2. If ideas are things as Bishop Berkeley supposes, what is the reason that the idea of a fire will not be a good substitute for the reality.

Thine &c

J.G.W.

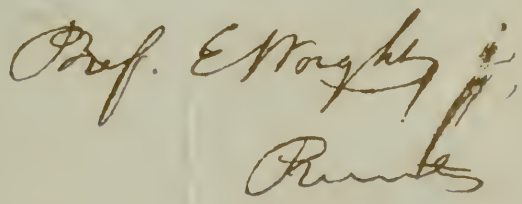
Whittier

John G

3

Whittier Esq.

Story



belonged, favoring the use of the ballot. Whittier begins with a reference to Garrison's change of front in this matter, and then shows a little natural resentment in regard to a paragraph that appeared a fortnight before in the "Liberator," on the occasion of his being forced by serious illness to give up the editorship of the "Pennsylvania Freeman." This is the paragraph referred to: —

"J. G. Whittier has retired from the editorial chair of the 'Freeman.' The time has been when we should have deeply regretted to make this announcement; but, in his present state of mind, as it respects political action, and 'new organization,' and in view of the course he has thought proper to pursue in regard to the state of things in this his native commonwealth, we are reconciled to his withdrawal."

On account of this paragraph Whittier's friends in Pennsylvania made a demonstration in his favor, and there was considerable bitterness engendered. The Eastern

Pennsylvania Society, being asked by Mrs. Chapman "to deal with Whittier as his state of mind requires," responded by selecting him to represent their society at the World's Convention in London. When this letter to Wright was written he had not received his credentials. When they came he planned to go, but was warned by his physician that the voyage and the excitement of the convention would be too much for his frail hold on life.

The outrage on the venerable Philadelphia Quaker consisted in riding him on a rail. His mild and intrepid demeanor prevented the application of tar and feathers prepared for the occasion, beyond a slight smearing of his coat.

The sentence about the celestial empire is a satirical allusion to the fact that the "new organization," which had its headquarters in New York, had sent Henry B. Stanton to lecture and collect funds in Massachusetts, a field the "old organization" claimed for

itself. The "Liberator" of that week contained an editorial paragraph severely animadverting upon the intrusion.[1] This seems

[1] In 1879, in his Introduction to Oliver Johnson's work on *Garrison and His Times*, Whittier refers to the strained relations which for a time existed between him and Garrison in these terms : —

"I felt it my duty to use my right of citizenship at the ballot box in the cause of liberty, while Garrison, with equal sincerity, judged and counselled otherwise. Each acted under a sense of individual duty and responsibility, and our personal relations were undisturbed. If, at times, the great anti-slavery leader failed to do justice to the motives of those who while in hearty sympathy with his hatred of slavery did not agree with some of his opinions and methods, it was but the pardonable and not unnatural result of his intensity of purpose, and his self-identification with the cause he advocated ; and, while compelled to dissent, in some particulars, from his judgment of men and measures, the great mass of the anti-slavery people recognized his moral leadership. The controversies of Old and New organization, Non-Resistance and Political action, may now be looked upon by the parties to them, who still survive, with the philosophic calmness which follows the subsidence of prejudice and passion."

to have reminded Whittier of the exclusiveness of China, which was just then having trouble with the too enterprising merchants of England.

Professor Wright was at this time editing the "Abolitionist," an organ of the "new organization," which opposed the "Liberator" not only on the question of using the ballot, but on several side issues, such as the appointment of women as delegates to conventions and as members of committees. This opposition to "women's rights" was steady and consistent. Whittier as a Quaker was all his life an equally steady advocate of the rights of women, but he objected to making this an issue in the anti-slavery contest. "One thing at a time" was his motto. The following letter was addressed to Professor Wright, at his office, No. 32 Washington Street, Boston: —

AMESBURY, ESSEX CO.,
14TH OF 3D MONTH, 1840.

MY DEAR FRIEND, E. W., JR.: Why hast thou never published the resolutions upon political action adopted at the New England Anti-Slavery Convention for 1838, going the whole figure on the *duty of voting?* These resolutions were advocated by Garrison himself, and the whole body of the non-resistants voted for them, with the exception of C. C. Burleigh and two or three others — one a Van Buren man, who could not give up his party. Look up the "Liberator" of that time. [The resolutions referred to were introduced by Whittier.]

Garrison, it seems, is "reconciled" to my leaving the "Freeman." This is consolatory. The great efforts made to render the abolitionists of Pennsylvania disaffected with me having totally failed, and indeed recoiled on their own heads, the next best thing is to have me quit the ground, whether by sickness or otherwise.

I want to be at the National Convention at Albany, but my health is miserable, and I must be content with wishing that it may be well attended by others. I am not entirely clear in favor of nominations now — but it may be that I am mistaken.

Who will represent your society in the London Convention? Why can't thee go? Or A. A. Phelps? Let the new as well as the [old] have a hearing.

What a diabolical outrage upon our friend Neall in Delaware! He has been a devoted friend of the slave from his youth upward, and is a man of the most undaunted courage and moral intrepidity. This was evinced at the time of the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall, and on various other occasions. It makes me almost ready to preach a crusade like another Peter the Hermit against the rascally slaveholders.

Tell H. B. S. [Stanton], if thee see him, that I shall expect a visit from him ere long — at all events before he leaves the

"Debatable Land" of the Bay State. By the bye, how dared the "barbarian" to set his foot upon the soil of the "celestial empire," and insult the presence of the Uncle to the Sun and Cousin to the Moon? Resolve me that, Mr. New Organizer.

Remember me kindly to "her of thine household," and believe me affectionately thy friend

JNO. G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

The above letter was in a few days followed by another, in which Whittier argued against the selection of a third party candidate for the presidency at the Albany convention. His advice was not followed; James G. Birney was nominated,[1] with Thomas Earle of Philadelphia as candidate for Vice-President. The result justified Whittier's prediction. The movement was denounced as a Van Buren trick, and less

[1] He was in England, and was not given an opportunity to refuse.

than eight thousand votes were secured in the whole country. It will be remembered that this was the beginning of the notable "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" campaign, which resulted in the triumphant election of General Harrison. When the question of slavery was not involved, Whittier's sympathies were with the Whig party. He began political life as a partisan of Henry Clay, for whom he wrote several spirited campaign poems. Professor Wright's early affinities were with the Democratic party.

AMESBURY, 25TH 3D MO., 1840.

MY DEAR FRIEND, E. W., JR.: In answer to thy kind letter inviting me to visit thee at thy country seat, I can only say that I would do so gladly were my health such as to admit of it. I am really ill, and any exposure or fatigue is sure to be visited severely upon me.

One word in regard to the convention at Albany. I am glad it has been called; it is

proper that the great question should be discussed, and that abolitionists should be exhorted to maintain their integrity. But credit me, for I know, that *nine tenths of the voting abolitionists* (and *all* the non-voting of course) will be opposed to a *nomination* at this time. Besides, you can find nobody to stand the abuse, misrepresentation, and Indian warfare which will be waged against them. Gerrit Smith positively refuses to stand as a candidate. So will James G. Birney, Judge Jay, or any other prominent man in our cause. It will be folly to put men in nomination, and then have them come out in the papers and decline; and any man who is worthy of such a nomination will most assuredly do so. The nomination will be, in my opinion, strongly opposed in Pennsylvania. It will be denounced as a Van Buren trick to defeat the Whigs; and the fact [Joshua] Leavitt and thyself are anti-Whig will be used with great effect. *All* the State societies will join hands with the Boston folks in

denouncing the movement. I speak confidently on this point.

Yet the time is rapidly coming when the friends of freedom will be compelled to take a stand against slavery. The Charleston, S. C., papers are running up the Calhoun flag for 1844! The North will take, as a matter of necessity abolition ground, and the battle will be between the free and slave-labor interests.

Let your convention settle the question that it is right and proper to use political action for the overthrow of slavery; that independent nominations are a legitimate means of carrying our principles into the politics of the country; that Martin Van Buren and William Henry Harrison are unworthy of the support of abolitionists; that it is better in this case to forego the privilege of voting on the Presidential question altogether than to sacrifice the interests of freedom by aiding in the election of an enemy to the cause.

That the opposition manifested to the nomination of candidates at this time on the part of abolitionists in various sections of the country; the brief period which remains to present the claims of these candidates to the public; the desire on the part of the convention to promote harmony in the anti-slavery ranks,—induce you to decline making this nomination, which under other circumstances you believe would have been attended with highly favorable results to the cause.

I write in great haste, and am not able to express myself as fully and clearly as I could wish. Thee will however understand my ideas. Take high ground as you please on the duty of exercising our rights and privileges as citizens, and commend to the serious consideration of abolitionists the question whether the time has not arrived when duty to the slave requires of us to take an unflinching, uncompromising stand, independent of caucus and party. But do not

gratify your enemies by making any nomination. *It will not be voted by one half of the men who now profess to be in favor of it.* Immediately after the Presidential election let a convention be called; you will then have *only* the non-resistant non-voters to oppose you.

I hope to be able to be in Boston in the course of a fortnight, when we will talk over the matters contained in thy note at leisure. Where is Bro. Stanton? I expected to see him at Amesbury. I had an excellent letter from friend Gerrit Smith a few days ago.

With love to all thy household, I am affectionately and truly thy old friend,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

In the following note, written in July, 1841, Whittier shows his constant interest in the game of politics. He suggests Rev. John Pierpont, at that time pastor of the

Hollis Street Church, Boston, as the Liberty party candidate for Governor, not expecting a choice by the people, but hoping to throw the election into the legislature. In 1842 Whittier made a similar effort to secure his brother poet as a candidate of his party for Congress. Several years afterward, the party selected Pierpont as its candidate for both these offices. The allusion to Joseph Sturge in this letter is a reminder that for several months in 1841 Whittier accompanied this eminent English philanthropist in his travels through this country.

AMESBURY, MASS., 12TH 7TH MO. [1841].

DEAR WRIGHT, — It is the opinion of many friends that some *well known* person should be our candidate for Governor. Could we not induce John Pierpont to stand? If so, we should rally on our side the overwhelming temperance host, and in all probability secure his election by carrying him into the legislature. I want an opportunity

apart even from abolitionism, to do honor to John Pierpont. There are thousands who feel as I do. He might not wish it, but if the matter was duly pressed upon him, would he refuse us the use of his name? Pray think of it, and if it strikes thee favorably, *act forthwith.*

I only went as far as Worcester with J. Sturge. I shall be back to Boston in a few days, if I am able.

Ever and truly thine,

J. G. W.

* * * * *

The next letter in this series is one written by Whittier on the eve of Wright's sailing for England in 1844. It enclosed letters of introduction to some of Whittier's literary friends, and contained a suggestion which resulted in an edition of Whittier's "Ballads and Other Poems" being published in London, with an introduction by Prof. Wright, in the course of the same year. At this time the only collections of Whittier's poems that

had been published were the Philadelphia edition of 1838, and "Lays of my Home and Other Poems," issued by Ticknor & Fields, Boston, in 1843. These are the two volumes referred to in the following letter, from which the proposed selections were to be made: —

AMESBURY, 24TH 2D MO., 1844.

DEAR WRIGHT, — I send thee four letters, and would [have sent] more, but in truth I have no English correspondence worth speaking of. Gurney is a good French scholar, and something of an influential man, well acquainted with European literati.

Will thee do a little errand for me? It has been intimated that my poems would be republished in England in Clarke's publications, like Longfellow's, etc. Now, if the deed is not done when thee arrive, will thee take the trouble to see Clarke and let him publish a volume under thy superintendence? It should be made up from both of my

volumes, leaving out a part of each. Perhaps this would be a fair selection :—

FROM VOL. I.

Stanzas.
C. B. Storrs.
Hunters of Men.
Gov. McDuffie.
Lines on Reading "Right and Wrong [in Boston]."
Thomas Shipley.
The Slave Ships.
Stanzas for the Times.
Ritner.
Clerical Oppressors.
Lines on Pinckney's Resolutions.
S. O. Torrey.
Massachusetts (with the omission of the fifth verse).
Farewell of Virginia Slave Mother.
Address Pa. Hall.
Palestine.
The Female Martyr.
The two translations from Lamartine.
Familist's Hymn.

Call of the Christian.
The Crucifixion.
The Fratricide.
The Fountain.
Pentucket; the last line but one should read, "Whose grass-grown surface overlies."
Stanzas suggested by the Letter of a Friend.

FROM VOL. 2.

The Norsemen.
Ballad of Cassandra Southwick.
Funeral Tree of the Sokokis.
St. John.
Follen.
To a Friend returning from Europe.
Raphael.
Democracy; with the first line of the 13th verse to read thus: "Not from the poor and shallow fount."
Lines written on reading pamphlets published by Clergymen in Defence of the Gallows.
Cypress Tree of Ceylon.
Chalkley Hall; the last verse save one, last line, let it read: "Like brother pilgrims turn."

Massachusetts to Virginia.
Memories.
Lines on Receiving a Cane from the Wood of Pa. Hall.
To ——, with a copy of Woolman.

I have written these down as they occurred to me, without arranging them. Perhaps, if published, the anti-slavery poems should come first, including the two poems from the Boston volume. Then, under the head of Ballads, "The Norsemen," "Cassandra Southwick," "Sokokis," "Fratricide," "Fountain," "Pentucket," "St. John," and "Familist's Hymn," might follow; and then the others under the head of "Miscellaneous." I have no copy of the Philadelphia volume, or I would send it with this. Please procure one somewhere, and also get one on my account at Ticknor's, of the Boston edition. I am sorry to trouble thee, but I can't well avoid it just now, as the temptation to do so is strong. On thy way over, if thou art not too seasick, thou canst

make a *selection from my selection*, to suit thy judgment. I enclose "Daniel Wheeler," which would be pleasant perhaps to our English friends.

I think an edition of my poems would sell pretty well in England, irrespective of any merit or demerit. The Friends and Abolitionists would buy them. Did thee see John and Maria Candler when in the United States? I give thee a line to them. They will give thee an introduction to the Howitts, to whom, if thee see them, express on my behalf the gratitude I owe them for the pleasure I have derived from their writings.

And now, dear Elizur, God bless and prosper thee abundantly, and, if consistent with His will, may we both live to talk over thy adventures in old England. As ever thy true friend and brother in the cause of freedom,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

While Prof. Wright was in London, he received the following letter from Whittier. For an explanation of the reference to the "J. L. Brown case," see Whittier's Complete Poetical Works, Cambridge edition, p. 289. Extracts are there given from Judge O'Neale's remarkable address to the prisoner, who was sentenced to death for aiding a young slave woman, whom he loved and had married, to escape from slavery. Whittier's strong epithet, "devilishly religious," is abundantly justified by these extracts. The case excited much attention in England as well as in this country. Thirteen hundred clergymen and clerical officers in Great Britain addressed a memorial to the churches of South Carolina against the atrocity. The sentence was commuted to scourging and banishment. Whittier's indignant verses were omitted from several editions of his complete works; but, in 1888, when he made his last revision of his poems, he decided to include "The Sentence of John

L. Brown." In the following letter this is the poem referred to as "Stanzas for the Times, 1844." This was a favorite title with Whittier, and was originally attached to several of his poems written between 1835 and 1850. It will be noticed that Whittier says "there is nothing in the 'North Star' worth reprinting." And yet that work contained "The Exiles."

AMESBURY, 28TH 4TH MO., 1844.

MY DEAR FRIEND: A thousand thanks for thy kind letter; and I only regret that I am so situated just now as to oblige me to give thee but a poor apology for an answer.

I saw with pleasure in the London "Anti-Slavery Reporter" a communication of thine relating to J. L. Brown's case. Thou wilt see that the poor fellow has escaped with that which to some would be worse than death itself — a disgraceful public whipping. The truth is the man owes his life to the devilishly religious (I can think of

no more expressive term) tone of the sentence of Judge O'Neale. It shocked the sober unfanatical class. It made *too* broad a farce of piety and religious profession; it too completely confounded all distinctions between right and wrong, and so editors and ministers who can look unconcerned upon the growing power of the system of which the case is the legitimate fruit, cried out against it, and their remonstrances unquestionably had an effect upon the civil authorities of South Carolina.

I wish I had time and space to write out all I feel and could say in this miserable business of Repudiation; for I think it can be demonstrated that slavery is at the bottom of it. Mississippi set the example, or rather some counties of that State, several years ago, by driving the sheriffs out of their limits and pulling down court-houses, and establishing Judge Lynch's summary tribunal as a court of appeals from the decisions of those ordinary tribunals which still in some sort held

and acted upon the commonly received notions of *meum* and *tuum*. It has been for the last ten years as much as a man's life was worth to attempt the collection of debts in certain portions of the Mississippi valley. The dunned slaveholder had only to pronounce his unwelcome visitor an *abolitionist*, and the creditor was glad to escape with a whole skin, and let his debt liquidate itself. Instead of suspending payment as others do who owe more than they can or are willing to pay, the slaveholder had nothing to do but to *suspend his creditor* to the first tree.

Do let the people of England understand that it is not Democracy, but its baleful antagonist, the monopoly and oligarchy of Slavery which repudiates. The whole country is to a greater or less extent demoralized by the legalized robbery of the system.

I send thee with this, though I fear too late, a copy of three poems of mine, "The Christian Slave," "Stanzas for the Times, 1844," and "Texas — Voice of New Eng-

land." If possible I should like to have them in the volume. I think the "Stanzas" will convince thee that we are not all miserable and silent in respect to J.L.Brown. There is nothing in the "North Star" of mine worth reprinting. I could send thee a dozen more pieces, but there is enough in all conscience. Do as thee think best about altering that verse in "Texas." I am not a good judge of what is best in such cases.

Thou wilt see that the Liberty Party is aroused. New Hampshire vote doubled, Connecticut, a small gain — 1872 last year — this year 1971. The Whigs and Locos made desperate exertions, and little or none made on our part, save by one man: W. H. Burleigh, who has done his duty.

Remember me kindly to George Thompson and John Scoble and Joseph Sturge, when thee see them. I shall write to Joseph, if possible. I like thy letters "hugely" as Tristram Shandy's father said of Yorick's sermon. They are true, graphic and spirited.

I have only time to say, God bless thee, and prosper thee.

J. G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

The following letter, written in October, 1845, in the heat of the anti-Texas campaign, illustrates Whittier's shrewdness as a politician. He sees the uselessness of contending against the admission of Texas as a territory, and would narrow the contest to the question of its coming in as a slave State: —

AMESBURY, 14TH 10TH MO., [1845.]

MY DEAR FRIEND: Thy note has been received and I haste to say that what with fatigue and anxiety of the late convention, and a severe cold which I took there, I have been confined at home for several days sick. and shall of course be unable to be with you to-morrow. Were it in my power I would not fail be present.

Two things occur to me: 1st. As to the

character of the movement. It is too late to make it — at least before the public — an anti-*Texas* one. The people believe Texas [ought] *to be annexed*, and a majority of them believe it either right in itself, or as a sort of providential necessity in the development of our Anglo Saxon destiny. But a large portion of the noisiest Democrats even, who are hoarse with hurras for Texas, would be glad if that ugly matter of slavery could [be] shown not to be after all an inevitable condition of annexation. Now then, let us not attempt impossibilities, but take our stand not against the *territory* of Texas, but its *slavery*. Let us confine ourselves to a simple remonstrance against the admission of Texas as *a slave State* into the Union. With this we can go before the people, and, in spite of the office-holders, we can carry them with us.

2nd. As to the circulation of the remonstrances for signature. Could there not be measures taken for having the remonstrances in a conspicuous and proper place at

every town meeting on the 10th of November? In this way, a majority, to say the least, of our legal voters would sign the petition beyond a doubt. Let there be a suitable person, or persons, to take charge of it in each town, and the work would be done.

Of one thing, however, I am painfully convinced. The labor, the responsibility, the expense of this movement will fall where all similar ones have fallen, on the poor, despised abolitionists. With a few noble exceptions, even the Whigs will do nothing, and in giving their names will consider that they have laid us under heavy obligations. Well, be it so. Let us thank God that we can carry the burden ourselves. For one, so long as I can wield a pen, or lift a voice, I am willing to work; and if Texas comes in red with slavery, it shall not be my fault. In anything that a sick man can do, command my services.

I believe with $10,000 to expend in employing persons in all the States to devote themselves to the work for the next three

months, we would stop this infernal scheme of slavery. We did it in 1837, at the expense of half that sum, and of labor which thee and Stanton and myself can appreciate.

Ever and cordially thy friend,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

Five days later he wrote this letter, which still further illustrates his zeal, energy, and shrewdness as a politician. He was greatly interested in the split in the Democratic party in New Hampshire, which resulted the next year in placing John P. Hale in the U. S. Senate. On the back of this letter Professor Wright has written, "A blowing up!"

AMESBURY, 19TH 10TH MO., 1845.

MY DEAR WRIGHT, — What does it mean? The last "Emancipator" comes out on the 16th inst. with Dr. Brewster for Lieutenant-Governor, and in the *same paper*, under date of the 10th is a call for a meeting

of the State Liberty Committee to nominate somebody else in his place! Is that your way of doing business? For Heaven's sake, let us know here what you have concluded upon. The "Transcript" here had Burritt week before last; last week it had Brewster, and this week nobody! All this looks like child's play — or rather, that for want of due energy at headquarters our election is going by default. The committee should consider that we have not Mrs. Chapman's clairvoyant powers, and have no supernatural means of getting at their decision.

My health is still miserable or I would be with you at your meeting at Sewall's. As to the Middlesex convention, I don't think much of it. Speech-making and resolutions — in the name of common sense, what are they wanted for? Where are the men and women to go from house to house over the whole State, and get names to the remonstrance? That's the question. Let such men as [S. C.] Phillips and Hoar and Child give

344014

now one twentieth part as much as we poor dogs have done heretofore to keep Texas out of the Union, and it will be of more service than a ton of speeches. You need $1000 to carry on the work thoroughly.

Let the Middlesex convention do this: Issue an appeal to the people of Massachusetts — brief and earnest — every word electric — appealing to all classes *to act at once* in the circulation of the remonstrance. Let a collection be set on foot to defray the expenses of the Texas committee, and to circulate the Report, etc., of Sewall. Let a committee be chosen to correspond at once with anti-Texas men in other States, and to urge them to action. Let a committee be raised to solicit funds to carry forward the operations of the (state) committee, and, *sub rosa*, to enable the committee to aid in sustaining the cause in New Hampshire. This must be done. The anti-Texas men of New Hampshire need assistance, and the anti-Texas men of Massachusetts must give it. Of course this must

be managed with caution and secrecy. The Texas party there will strain every nerve to elect Woodbury. Better than a thousand petitions would be their defeat at the next trial. In haste thy friend,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

A few days later Whittier wrote again, enclosing the Amesbury remonstrance. He says: "The unfortunate weather last week prevented me from doing much in the way of its circulation. Nearly all our voters would have signed, could we have seen them." The work of securing signatures to the remonstrances was pushed with vigor throughout the State, and a monster petition, with the names of sixty thousand citizens of Massachusetts, was prepared. John G. Whittier and Henry Wilson were delegated by the Liberty Party to carry this document to Washington. They arrived three days before the final vote was taken, which

admitted Texas to the Union. This time they spent in active canvassing among members of Congress, in the effort to brace up the Northern Democrats who were at heart opposed to the measure. But the party drill was too strong. Nearly all voted as the Southern wing of their party demanded. Whittier tells the story in the following letters from Washington: —

WASHINGTON, 15TH 12TH MO., 1845.

E. WRIGHT, JR., DEAR FRIEND: I came to this city on seventh day last; and although well nigh sick with fatigue and cold, have tried to do all that could be done to promote the object of my visit. I have seen and labored with several of the Northern Democrats: Preston King, Wheaton, and others. They all say it is a bad thing to have Texas come in as a slave State; they curse between their teeth, as it were, the whole Southern wing of their party; but they dare not stand up like men against it. Wheaton says he will vote

against the admission; and the others *talk* very well — how they will vote is another question. Brinckerhoff is full of fight apparently, but even his vote is doubtful. The Northern Democrats have had no understanding with each other — in fact each one is afraid of his neighbor, and all afraid of the South.

The Whigs also are without concert, and too many without heart and feeling in respect to slavery. Giddings of Ohio is a noble exception. Rockwell from our State will speak on the question, and, I trust, well.

The remonstrances are pouring in profusely. Many thousands — I should think fifteen or twenty thousand at least to-day. I am fully persuaded that had the other free States done what Massachusetts has done, the mischief might have been averted. As it is, I fear it cannot be. My present impression is that the Democratic members from Maine, Vermont, and New York (with three or four exceptions) will vote against the present

constitution of Texas. I have not seen our Senators. I had a brief interview with Gen. [John A.] Dix. He is well disposed, but weak. Sterner stuff is requisite at this crisis.

I succeeded in rousing some of the quiet Philadelphians. A meeting is to be held there to-night. Such men as Dr. Wistar, Judge Bonnie, and some of our *weighty* Quakers are engaged in it. The memorials are in circulation, and will be here to-morrow or next day. Gov. Seward is daily expected here. I shall do what I can and then leave the city. It is too expensive here to remain long as a mere looker-on.

Wilson has been talking with the Whigs, and trying to awaken them to a manly and resolute effort; but he has not yet met with the success which he hoped for. The debate comes on to-morrow.

Very truly thy friend,

J. G. WHITTIER.

* * * * *

This brief note, the last in the series, is Whittier's announcement of the result of the vote he had been so anxiously awaiting: —

5 o'clock, 16th 12th Mo., 1845.

Dear Wright: The deed is done, at least so far as the House of Representatives can do it. Texas is admitted into the Union with its slavery. The Northern Democratic representatives, with a few exceptions, voted for it under the party drill and the *overseer eye* of slaveholders. I have seen, in the few days I have been here, poor human nature in its most pitiful aspect. Northern men protesting in the name of heaven and earth and a worse place than the latter, against the whole scheme of Texas, voting for it in an hour after! Such is the fact. The slave power rules Congress completely, absolutely. I have no time for comment now, as the mail is closing.

J. G. Whittier.

ADDENDUM

THE following letter to Professor Wright from Mr. Whittier has come to light since the foregoing pages were printed. It antedates all the others, and is of especial interest as illustrating the early political aims and methods of Mr. Whittier, to which he consistently held during the whole anti-slavery contest. It also contains some interesting autobiographical material not hitherto available. The Philadelphia convention of December, 1833, at which the American Anti-Slavery Society was organized, chose Whittier and Wright as its secretaries, and Wright became corresponding secretary of the new organization, which established offices at No. 130 Nassau Street, New York. Whittier returned to his farm in Haverhill, and soon received from Wright

a notice that he had been appointed an agent of the society. This is Whittier's reply to the notification: —

HAVERHILL, 25TH OF 2D MO., [1834.]

MY DEAR FRIEND: I ought before this to have acknowledged the receipt of a document from thee, appointing me an agent for the A. A. S. Society. I am most grateful for this mark of confidence, although I needed no incentive in this glorious cause.

The recent developments at Washington have astonished everybody. God in his Providence is about to open the eyes of this nation. The light which is now blazing upon us, if unheeded or turned from, will I fear be the precursor of sweeping retribution.

Certainly the friends of suffering humanity have reason to rejoice that the builders of the Babel of Prejudice and Oppression have been confounded. In the words of Sheridan on another occasion, "each clamors to be heard in his own barbarous language — each

thwarts and reproaches the other, and even while their fell rage assails with common hate the peace and virtue of the world, the civil war in their own tumultuous legions defeats the purpose of the foul conspiracy." The days of the American Colonization Society are numbered. Alas, for those stars of our moral firmament which it will soon draw down, like Lucifer, in its fall! They will not read the signs of the times. Strong delusions are upon them, and they are willing to believe a lie.

Situated as I am, I can at present do but little. I cannot as yet accuse myself of neglecting any opportunity for the dissemination of truth on the great subject of slavery. The clergy in this vicinity are rapidly taking side with us. There is another class which might, I think, be easily moved. I allude to that class of politicians or civilians whose sphere of influence is limited to their town or county. These can take hold of our cause without essentially endangering their

popularity, and through them the higher classes of our statesmen may be reached. I have some influence with this class. My exertions as a political writer for the last four years have gained me a large number of political friends. The columns of all the leading newspapers are open to me. With many of the editors I am on terms of intimate personal acquaintance. All know me as a quondam brother — as a political friend or opponent. Now if I were at leisure to reply to such misrepresentations and charges as occasionally appear in these papers — to distribute pamphlets and papers — to visit personally gentlemen in my vicinity and engage their co-operation — and finally to combine the anti-slavery feeling upon some definite and practical object — such, for instance, as the election of members of the state legislature, who will bring forward and sustain resolutions instructing our Congressional delegation to urge the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia — I have no doubt I could do good and efficient service.

But I have really little leisure for such exertions. In the first place, my brother and myself are almost constantly engaged in the affairs of our small farm, which does not yield profit enough to enable us to hire labor: and I am obliged to occupy my evenings and other leisure time in writing occasional literary articles for the "New England Magazine," for which I am paid. Besides this, I have felt myself under the necessity of applying myself to the study of constitutional law, political economy, etc. Whatever I have written on the subject of slavery has been by an effort of extra exertion, and under circumstances of haste and constant interruption.

Now, if the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society could assure me for the term of six months the sum of $150, I should be able to bend all the energies which God has given me to the great work before us; and I fully believe that at the end of that time we shall be able to lend

both moral and pecuniary strength to the National Society. I have specified that sum as the smallest which could possibly meet my expenses, as I should be compelled to travel considerably from home, and owing to the consequent interruption of my labor on the farm, I should be under the necessity of hiring a person to supply my place.

I have been induced to make this proposal from a sincere desire of aiding in the advancement of a righteous cause. I have recently had an offer, highly favorable in a pecuniary point of view, to take charge of a political newspaper, but should I accept it, my mouth would be closed on the subject nearest my heart. The political idols of the day will accept of no divided homage. Every principle must be compromised — even holy truth suppressed — which does not tend to their elevation. Besides, I fear should I leave this place, that the leaven of anti-slavery, which is now working steadily and powerfully around me, will be checked by the

strong counter influence of Andover Colonizationism.

Counsel me, my dear brother. Let me hear from thee soon. If in the present state of the Society's funds the sum I have named cannot be spared — or, if it be urgently demanded in any other direction, believe me, I shall most cheerfully acquiesce in the necessity, and lose no opportunity of advocating to the extent of my ability the cause of Truth and Humanity.

Tell br. Goodell that I shall write him soon in reference to the progress of anti-slavery in this part of the country. Remember me most affectionately to Dr. Cox, and my friends Tappan and Denison, and believe me thy affectionate friend and co-worker,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

P. S. Who is the writer of that "colonization sermon?" 'T is excellent. The text (Gen. 37) is exactly appropriate.

At the time this letter was written, the abolitionists were rejoicing, prematurely as it proved, over the bankruptcy and disruption of the American Colonization Society, which under the pretense of philanthropy had been managed in the interest of slaveholders. Its agents at the North and in England covertly antagonized the anti-slavery movement, and secured the contributions of many good people who did not realize that they were hindering and not helping the cause of the slave. It was this society, then suffering from internal dissensions, that Whittier characterized as "the Babel of Prejudice and Oppression." Many earnest reformers were deluded by its pretensions. The Theological Seminary at Andover was for a time regarded as one of the strongholds of the colonization movement, and it will be seen by this letter that Whittier felt he was needed in that vicinity to counteract its influence. The "colonization sermon" referred to in the postscript was probably

some clever satire, founded on the story of Joseph being sent to Africa by his brethren, to get rid of him.

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